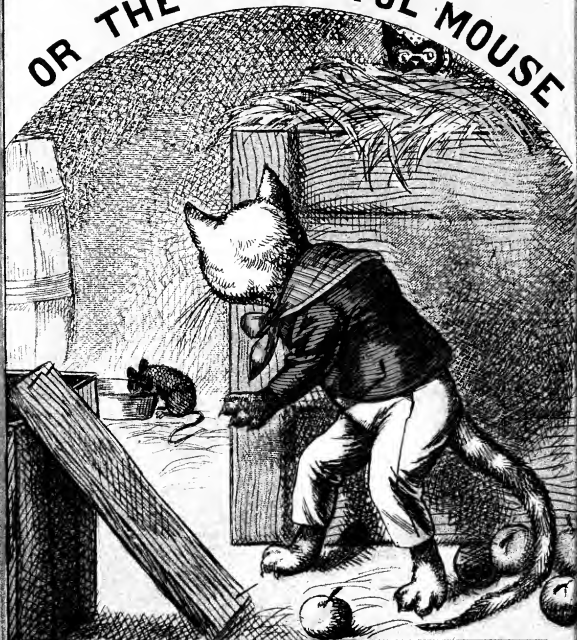


GRANDMOTHER

PUSS

OR THE GRATEFUL MOUSE



McLOUGHLIN BROTHERS. NEW-YORK:

GRANDMOTHER PUSS,

OR,

THE GRATEFUL MOUSE.

I WISH that all the little boys and girls who read this story could see Grandmother Puss; but as they cannot, I will tell you something about her. She is a very large, and handsome old cat of grave aspect, and solemn manners. Her face is black, with white marks around the eyes, and across the nose, which make her look as if she wore spectacles; and she has a grandson called Peter, who lives with her.

When Peter was but six weeks old, he was left an orphan; for some very, very wicked dog had killed his mother! Grandmother Puss at once took the lonely kitten to her heart, with many tears, sharing her milk with him; and as he grew larger, giving him the fattest and most tender mice, she could catch.

I think she spoiled him, as other Grandmothers do. He never watched for mice, and did nothing to earn his own living, but passed his time chiefly in chasing his own tail, and other vain and foolish amusements. Now, there was an old gray rat who lived in a hole, in the cellar. He was always up to some kind of mischief—had spoiled a great deal of milk, and carried off all the cheese he could get his paws on—once he was even seen trying to get away with an egg, which he was rolling gently toward his hole!

He did so much harm, and was so very knowing and sly, that at last Grandmother Puss declared, with tears in her eyes, that she would neither taste, touch, nor handle a single mouse, until she had caught the old gray robber. And she kept her word. She sometimes sat a whole night, watching for the old rogue, but although she often saw him, she could never catch him.

There was also a cunning little mouse, who lived near by. He was called Cooky, because he was once seen lugging off a whole cooky, to give to his lame sister. Now, the wicked old rat tried nearly as hard to catch poor Cooky as Grandmother Puss did to get the old rat; and Cooky was more afraid of the grim old rat, than he was of the cat herself. One night Cooky saw the rat at one end of the cellar, very busy, eating a piece of cheese that he had stolen. So Cooky betook himself to the other end, where he had seen some fine apples, and he was very fond of apples, indeed.

So he crept softly up to the heap, and was just about to taste a fine, juicy one, when the cat saw him. "I said, I would not touch, or taste a mouse," she said, "but I did *not* say I would not scare one, and I cannot see these nice apples spoiled—so here goes." With these words, she made a rush for the mouse, making all the noise she could; which is not usual with cats, you know, which go very softly, in order not to scare the mice before they can catch them.

Cooky, of course, darted away to his hole in a hurry, and there peeped out carefully. "Now," said he to himself, "that cat has a kind look; I've a good mind to try, and make a bargain with her, so that I can get something to eat once in a while. Perhaps I can make her promise not to eat me, but it will do no harm to try, and everybody knows that Grandmother Puss is a cat of her word." So just as Puss was about to start for the other end of the cellar, for a tussle with the old rat, she heard a small squeaking voice, which said, "Please, Grandmother Puss, I want to make a bargain with you." "A bargain with *me!*" said Puss, looking about in surprise for the small voice. "What do you mean?"

"Why, I want to come into the cellar whenever I like, and eat whatever scraps I can find, besides taking away a little for my poor, lame sister. Now, if you will let



The Old Rat Stealing Cheese.

me do so, and promise not to hurt me, I will do anything in the world that you ask me to do—that is *right*—and that I am able to do.”

This was a big speech for a little mouse, but Grandmother Puss only thought how Cooky could help her in



Death of the Old Rat.

the matter of catching the old gray rat. She turned it over in her mind for some time, keeping one eye on Cooky, who, in his eagerness, had come outside his hole, and at last said: "Do you know Mr. Gray Rat, Cooky?" "Yes, Madame," said Cooky, with great

politeness. "Do you know where he is now?" pursued Pussy. "Yes, Madame, I think I do," replied Cooky, growing bolder every minute. "Well," said Grandmother Puss, solemnly, "that rat has caused my good mistress a great deal of trouble, and if you can in any way tempt him within my reach, so that I can catch him, I promise never to harm you, or to allow my grandson, Peter, to do so." "It's a bargain," said Cooky, "you hide here behind this box, and when you see me run by, with the rat after me, you can give one spring, and catch the rogue; but please be quick about it, or he may catch *me*."

So Puss hid behind the box; Cooky went as near old Gray Rat's hole as he dared, then, giving a frightened squeak, as though he had just caught sight of his enemy, turned and ran with all his speed toward the place where Puss lay concealed. The old rat heard Cooky's squeak, and was after him in a moment squealing out, "I'll have you now, master Cooky, and you'll make me a nice supper." But long before he could reach Cooky, Grandmother Puss pounced upon the gray old rascal, and tore him to pieces in a trice, though I fear she found her prize too tough for dinner! Then Puss told Cooky to come and drink milk from her dish, which he did, and then ran off, well pleased, to his hole, taking some bread with him to feed his poor, lame sister.

Although Grandmother Puss thought her grandson, Peter, much too lazy to try and catch Cooky, still she thought it safer to forbid him to go near him, or to disturb him in any way. Now Peter didn't want to catch Cooky, or any other mouse, so long as he was free to do so.

But as soon as Grandmother Puss told him to let little Cooky alone, and never to go near her, or frighten her; Peter was at once seized with a violent wish to do that very thing. I am sorry to say, that many

little children who should know how to behave much better than Peter; very often feel the same desire to do what they know is wrong. So Peter now thought that Cooky must be the sweetest and tenderest mouse alive. The more he thought of him, the more his mouth watered for him. He did not believe his Grandma would punish him much, even if she found him out.

He even tried to persuade himself that his Grandma was merely fattening Cooky up for her own use; and intended to eat him herself as soon as he was in good condition!

This went on for some time, until at last Peter's desire to taste Cooky grew too strong for him. So one day, he went softly down the stairs and hid himself, to wait for Cooky's daily visit to the box. He thought he was alone in the cellar, but he was mistaken—Grandma Puss was not far off, watching for any stray rat who might come that way.

She saw Peter, and wondered what he was about. She soon found out. In a short time poor Cooky came out to get his dinner, with no thought of danger in his mind. Quick as a flash, the wicked Peter grabbed him! Luckily for Cooky, Peter thought he would worry his victim a little before eating him, as cats often do; and so while he was letting poor Cooky run a little way, and then catching him again; Grandma Puss, who had seen the whole thing, crept slyly up, and in a moment, the astonished Peter was rolling upon the floor, from the effects of a box on the ear from his enraged Grandmother.

Cooky, of course, got back to his hole with great speed. He was not much hurt, and as soon as he felt himself safe, he looked out, and saw Puss giving Peter a cuffing and shaking that did his little heart good; and which Peter remembered as long as he lived. Grandma then told him, that in future he must catch his own mice, and as that gave him plenty to do, and kept

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Grandma Puss, punishes Peter.

wicked thoughts out of his mind, he grew up to be an an ornament to his race. He is a smart cat now, catches mice for his Grandma as well as himself; and is much thought of in the very highest circles of society.

THE END.